

## Brooklyn Must Be Counted

An accurate Decennial census will play a critical role in shaping Brooklyn's future. Without full participation from our community, we risk losing congressional seats and billions in federal, state and local funds aid. After undercounts in 1990 and 2000, the Census Bureau put in place safeguards to prevent undercounts in communities like Brooklyn, known as a "hard to count" community. For these important reasons, I made the 2010 Census a top priority when I became Chairman of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform. That is also why I am deeply troubled by recent allegations of fraud at a local census office in Brooklyn.

The Commerce Department and the New York Regional Census Center recently received an anonymous tip on their whistleblower hotline indicating that two employees at the Brooklyn North East local census office used an online database to fraudulently complete Census questionnaires. Days later, the Commerce Department Inspector General received another tip that described situations where local census enumerators were falsifying documents and estimating the number of people living in a household that appeared inhabited. Proper protocol requires enumerators to follow up, in person, to obtain the correct information from neighbors or building managers.

To get a better understanding of what occurred at the Brooklyn North East local census office, [I held a hearing](#) at Brooklyn Borough Hall this week that examined these serious allegations and how the Census Bureau is working to ensure the accuracy of the Brooklyn census count.

Census Director Dr. Robert Groves explained that after learning of the allegations, the Census Bureau in Washington, DC, and the New York Regional Census Center opened an investigation into the matter. As a result of the investigation, it was determined that local census officials violated the Bureau's procedures. The two people responsible for the fraudulent activity were fired and the night shift supervisor who refused to carry out illegal instructions, and who resigned in protest, was quickly reinstated. Immediately following the investigation, the Census Bureau ordered the recount of 10,000 households in the affected neighborhoods of Williamsburg, Bedford-Stuyvesant, Bushwick, and Greenpoint. Since then, the Census Bureau has conducted additional training at the Brooklyn census office for employees and is currently investigating other offices in the region to ensure that the problem is not widespread.

Todd Zinser, the Commerce Department's Inspector General, credited the Census Bureau for its swift action to investigate and address the allegations against the two local census officials. He pointed out that the Census Bureau has developed a process to identify cases of fraud at the local office and are currently analyzing how it can be applied nationwide to detect similar instances. In other words, the system worked the way it was supposed to when a problem arose.

As a co-sponsor of the Whistleblower Protection and Enhancement Act, I am gratified to know that the problems in the Brooklyn North East census office came to light because of whistleblower complaints. I was pleased to hear Director Groves confirm that the quality control measures in place to report these types of incidents worked.

With so many in our community in need of help, we need to root out problems and ensure the census is as accurate as possible. Anything that compromises the integrity of the 2010 Census is unacceptable. I want each and every resident of Brooklyn to know how important I think it is for them to be counted in this census. I intend to follow this issue closely, and make sure the Census Bureau does all that is necessary to count Brooklyn accurately and fairly.

[This blog originally appeared on the blog Room Eight](#)